

The Effects of an Immigration Policy on the Economic Integration of Migrants and on Natives' Attitudes: The Case of Syrian Refugees in Turkey

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Abstract : Turkey's immigration policy is a controversial issue considering its legal, economic, social, and political and human rights dimensions. Formulation of an immigration policy goes hand in hand with political processes, where natives' attitudes play a significant role. On the other hand, as was the case in Turkey, radical changes made in immigration policy or policies lacking transparency may cause severe reactions by the host society. The underlying discussion paper aims to analyze quantitatively the effects of the existing 'open door' immigration policy on the economic integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey, and on the perception of the native population of refugees. For the analysis, semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group interviews have been conducted. After the introduction, a literature review is provided, followed by theoretical background on the explanation of natives' attitudes towards immigrants. In the next section, a qualitative analysis of natives' attitudes towards Syrian refugees is presented with the subtopics of (i) awareness, general opinions and expectations, (ii) open-door policy and management of the migration process, (iii) perception of positive and negative impacts of immigration, (iv) economic integration, and (v) cultural similarity. Results indicate that, natives concurrently have social, economic and security concerns regarding refugees, while difficulties regarding security and economic integration of refugees stand out. Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, such as the educational level and employment status, are not sufficient to explain the overall attitudes towards refugees, while they can be used to explain the awareness of the respondents and the priority of the concerns felt.

Keywords : economic integration, immigration policy, integration policies, migrants, natives' sentiments, perception, Syrian refugees, Turkey

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